

Transcript of Master of Ehime Maru
Honolulu, HI.
February 12, 2001
Transcribed by Ted White
June 25, 2001

Mr. Woody: This is Monday the 12th. The first person to ask questions will be Mr. Roth-Roffy, followed by Mr. White, and then myself, Mr. Woody:

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Good afternoon Captain, my name is Tom Roth-Roffy. If you desire, you may have another person assist you with this interview. Would you like to have anybody represent you or assist you with this interview?

Interpreter: Not at this time

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Also joining us in the interview are representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy. Could you tell us what you did from the time the vessel departed Honolulu until you were rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard. Please be as detailed as you can about what sort of things you saw or heard.

Interpreter: From the time he departed Honolulu, correct?

Mr. Roth-Roffy: Yes. And any equipment that was in operation, what his subordinates were doing. Basically, everything he can recall.

Interpreter: About 12 o'clock, Friday February 9th. They had a pilot from the pilot station until the H buoy. Dropped off the pilot at the H buoy about 12:10, 12:15. 160 course. Speed 11 knots. Forward draft 2 meters, 62 cm. Aft draft 4 meters, 88 cm. On the bridge there was himself, the quartermaster, and another sailor. The quartermaster was Nakamura, the sailor was Murai. He had the radar on. He had the autopilot on. Visibility was good. No radar or visual contacts. Approximately 1330 is when he felt the sudden rise and the shock noise – twice. He had no idea what caused it – he had seen nothing. He realized he hit something. It wasn't a noise or shock from the engine room – nothing in that nature could have caused that shock or noise. He had initial shock, it didn't go up too much. Just enough that things on the cabinet fell over. He went outside on the bridge to look around and see what could have caused it. That's when Murai saw a submarine on the port side. He could see a silhouette of the front section of the submarine. By the time he looked out on the bridge wing he realized that the water was at the portholes. He turned off the autopilot as soon as he felt the shock. By that time all electricity was off. He tried to activate the general alarm and then get on the PA system. He had never experienced anything like this, and he wanted to address the crew. But by that time there was no power so he couldn't activate the alarm or make an announcement. The radio operator came up and activated the EPIRB – he realized there was no power. He went aft in the bridge to the navigation room to collect the documents and log books. By the time he went inside there he saw the crew mustering outside. By that time he realized the water was pretty high and he decided to forget the documents and get out himself. By the

1 time he went around to the outside the water was He came to the starboard side of the
2 01 deck to the mustering station for emergencies. He doesn't recall how many were
3 there, but there were quite a bit of people there. By the time he came there and saw
4 students and crew gathered there, the water was already up to the base of the stack and
5 the waves were hitting him. Just trying to hold onto the life rail was a task. The captain
6 was standing on the starboard side amidships holding onto the life rail. At that point a
7 wave came and hit him. There was no listing, it was sinking parallel. When he was
8 knocked off the vessel, he saw most of the people in the mustering area thrown off like
9 himself. At that point life rafts were being automatically released and inflated. Anybody
10 near the rafts climbed in, and at the same time helped others get in the life rafts. They
11 attempted to connect some of the life rafts together. They had three rafts connected
12 together. They couldn't reach the other rafts. When he was in the raft he was constantly
13 looking around to see if he could find anybody. Calling out people, trying to get their
14 attention. He saw the submarine – it was at angle on the port quarter and turned around.
15 While the submarine was turning, the vessel completely sank. He stopped, and that's
16 when... There was a raft very close to the submarine, but there others father away. He
17 can't recall how far in meters, but not real far. The whole time they were floating out
18 there the submarine was basically just holding position. On the bridge he notice personnel
19 on board were checking them out with binoculars. At that time it took about an hour until
20 the first Coast Guard boat came out and the second was right behind it. The Coast guard
21 boats were going to all the rafts picking people up. At that point they deflated the rafts
22 with a knife after personnel were off them. There's ten life rafts but most were empty.
23 With the smaller boat picked up 3 people, the rest were in the larger Coast Guard vessel.
24 And that's all.

25
26 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What time did you leave the pier?

27
28 Interpreter: 12:00

29
30 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What pier were you tied up at?

31
32 Interpreter: 9

33
34 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What was your course at H buoy?

35
36 Interpreter: 166

37
38 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What was your next course change.

39
40 Interpreter: There were no course changes after that.

41
42 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Could you make a sketch of your transit from the pier to the
43 collision?

44
45 Interpreter: It would be easier with a chart.
46

1 Mr. Roth-Roffy: We don't have a chart available. Could you try a track line to the H
2 buoy and then the 166 course?

3
4 Interpreter: From leaving pier to X is where pilot was dropped off. He maintained 166
5 after the H buoy.

6
7 Mr. Roth-Roffy: At what point did you turn on autopilot?

8
9 Interpreter: When he assume course 166.

10
11 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What kinds of speed changes did he make from when he left the
12 pier?

13
14 Interpreter: The pilot was making all the engine telegraph orders so he doesn't recall,
15 but most of them were either ½ ahead or slow ahead. He changed to slow ahead when
16 they dropped off the pilot. At that point he rang up 7 knots until right there. He was at 7
17 knots for about 30 minutes, and that's where he changed it to 11 knots. 30 minutes from
18 the H buoy. That was about 1245.

19
20 Mr. Roth-Roffy: How long was he at 11 knots?

21
22 Interpreter: Until the collision. About an hour. When he got in the life raft he recalls
23 looking at his watch and it was 1345.

24
25 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Captain how many RPM is 7 knots, how many RPM is 11 knots?

26
27 Interpreter: 280- 300 is 7 knots. 420 is 11 knots

28
29 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What is maximum speed?

30
31 Interpreter: Navigation speed is about 12 knots, 430 RPM. 15 knots is above 100
32 percent so he doesn't use that speed – it's over 450 RPM.

33
34 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Where was the vessel bound and was he going to increase speed at
35 some point?

36
37 Interpreter: N14, W156. His plan was to arrive there on the 12th, Japan time, 11th
38 Hawaii time, in the morning. He would change his speed, slow down based on his arrival
39 time in that position.

40
41 Mr. Roth-Roffy: That was to fish?

42
43 Interpreter: Yes.

44
45 Mr. Roth-Roffy: How long were they going to remain there?

1 Interpreter: About 30 days.
2
3 Mr. Roth-Roffy: What was schedule after that?
4
5 Interpreter: After 30 days, they were going back to Japan.
6
7 LCDR Peterson: This was about 300 miles South of the big Island.
8
9 Interpreter: March 23rd was the day they were scheduled to arrive.
10
11 Mr. Roth-Roffy: How long were they in Honolulu?
12
13 Interpreter: 3 days.
14
15 Mr. Roth-Roffy: When did you turn on the vessel radar?
16
17 Interpreter: When they departed the pier they turned on the radar. Actually, 30 minutes
18 prior to departure. He turned on 1 radar. He did not turn on the second radar.
19
20 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Do you know what frequency band the radar operates on?
21
22 Interpreter: No. Both radars are the same. The brochure shows X band, 50 KW.
23
24 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Is there a model or manufacturer?
25
26 Interpreter: There is a number 1 and number 2 radar. The number is BR-3440MA-
27 X59. Manufacturer is Tokimic.
28
29 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Both radars identical?
30
31 Interpreter: Yes.
32
33 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Can you recall what range bands your radar was set at?
34
35 Interpreter: 12 miles.
36
37 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Were they on 12 mile setting continuously from leaving the pier?
38
39 Interpreter: Usually they'll vary as they depart, starting at about 1.5, then going to 3.
40 By the time he set his course, at that point they were already at 12 NM (at the H buoy).
41
42 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Do they have a fathometer
43
44 Interpreter: The one they use for fishing is the same one for a fathometer.
45
46 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Was it turned on?

1
2 Interpreter: No.
3
4 Mr. Roth-Roffy: When the electricity go out?
5
6 Interpreter: At the point they felt the shock is when the electricity went out. Kagajao
7 who was in the engine room said that the lights went out immediately. Kagajao was the
8 one injured, who is in the hospital.
9
10 Mr. Roth-Roffy: How did Kagajao tell him that?
11
12 Interpreter: When he went to see him the hospital.
13
14 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Does the vessel have an emergency generator?
15
16 Interpreter: Yes, on the port side about this area on the main deck. It is in a room. It
17 had no time to start. It is an autostart but it didn't start up. As they were traveling at 11
18 knots and they felt the shock, the vessel stopped immediately.
19
20 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Do you have battery backup
21
22 TAPE CUTOFF –ran out on side 1
23
24 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Thank you, that is all I have at this time.
25
26 Mr. Woody: These questions are in regard to your health, Are you in good health?
27
28 Interpreter: He has trouble sleeping at night. This is since the accident. He could sleep
29 before the accident.
30
31 Mr. Woody: Did you get a good nights sleep before the accident?
32
33 Interpreter: He had plenty of sleep the night before.
34
35 Mr. Woody: did he sleep on ship?
36
37 Interpreter: Yes
38
39 Mr. Woody: do you wear glasses?
40
41 Interpreter: Yes, all the time. He lost them with the ship.
42
43 Mr. Woody: What is your age?
44
45 Interpreter: 58
46

1 Mr. Woody: How long have you been master of the Ehime Maru?
2
3 Interpreter: About 8 years. He has 21 years experience sea experience.
4
5 Mr. Woody: What ships have you been master on?
6
7 Interpreter: Before this he was on commercial fishing vessels.
8
9 Mr. Woody: Could you give a resume of what ships you have served on. Now or in
10 writing later.
11
12 Interpreter: Since he graduated high school he has been on ship. Correction to the 21
13 years – he has been on the Ehime Maru for 21 years. For 8 years as captain.
14
15 Mr. Woody: The ship is only 5 years old?
16
17 Interpreter: They were all Ehime Maru's. This is the Third one. Ever since he
18 graduated from High School – age 18 – he has about 40 years of experience on ships. 21
19 years on the Ehime Maru. Prior to that he was a commercial fisherman. About 19 years.
20
21 Mr. Woody: Do you take any medications?
22
23 Interpreter: None prior to the accident.
24
25 Mr. Woody: What was your in-port routine before getting underway?
26
27 Interpreter: They came to port for a holiday.
28
29 Mr. Woody: When did they arrive?
30
31 Interpreter: February 6th, Tuesday. 0830 in the morning.
32
33 TAPE INTERRUPTED
34
35 Interpreter: The license is in 5 tiers, each higher than previous. Based on tonnage. He
36 is a 2nd tier, the next to the highest.
37
38 Mr. Woody: Tell us about normal routine at sea. Are you on watch or just there because
39 you are the master?
40
41 Interpreter: There are 7 sections of 2 man watches on the bridge watches. He is part of
42 the watch teams. 3 officers including himself are on the teams.
43
44 Mr. Woody: Are the other officers licensed? Chief officer and 2nd officer.
45
46 Interpreter: They are 3rd tier license.

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Mr. Woody: Are there times when there is no officer on the bridge?

Interpreter: When the 4 sections with seaman are on watch, there is no officer. When they get closer to land, they break down the watch sections and an officer is going to be on the bridge the whole time. It'll be 3 section for them at that time. He is one of those 3. They stand 4-hour watches. When they put the set out, it takes about 4 hours and he is on watch. When bringing the line back in, it takes about 12 hours. The more experienced ones will be on then.

Mr. Woody: That's all the human performance questions I have. Mr. Mr. White: will be next.

Mr. White: Who owns the ship

Interpreter: The Ehime Prefecture

Mr. White: Who controls the ships schedule?

Interpreter: The school.

Mr. White: Who controls the ships money?

Interpreter: The prefecture.

Mr. White: If something is broken on the ship, are they good about getting it fixed?

Interpreter: Yes, they pay pretty quickly.

Mr. White: Was anything broken on the ship before the accident.

Interpreter: The air conditioning was broken. It was fixed in Honolulu. When they departed, there was no degradation of any machinery.

Mr. White: Does the ship fish commercially? Do they make an income by selling the fish?

Interpreter: Yes, the money goes to the prefecture.

Mr. White: Does the crew get a share?

Interpreter: Yes, the crew gets a percentage, but the students don't.

Mr. White: After they left Japan on Jan 8th, did they hold emergency drills?

1 Interpreter: They had 1 boat drill, set off general alarm. Reviewed how to use life
2 jackets. General description of life rafts. Did not practice releasing boat.
3
4 Mr. White: When did they do this?
5
6 Interpreter: On the afternoon of the 15th. (about) Correction, they departed the 10th.
7
8 Mr. White: How often do they drill?
9
10 Interpreter: It is split up into 74-day trips, and they do it once in each trip.
11
12 Mr. White: What do students do for drills at school?
13
14 Interpreter: He doesn't know, but he is required to do one and that's what he did.
15
16 Mr. White: Did he have a life jacket on [when abandoning ship]?
17
18 Interpreter: Yes
19
20 Mr. White: Our understanding is the life jackets are stored near the bunks. Is it true,
21 and are there other jackets stored around the ship?
22
23 Interpreter: Generally, they are by the bed. There are seven other life jackets on the
24 bridge.
25
26 Mr. White: Where did he get his jacket?
27
28 Interpreter: The chief officer was on the bridge and he went down to get the jackets
29 from the staterooms, but the water was already up to his knees. He went back out and got
30 the life jackets from the bridge. He got one for himself and one for the Captain from
31 those on the bridge.
32
33 Mr. White: When he was in the life raft, does he remember seeing the helicopter.
34
35 Interpreter: Yes, he remembers seeing the helicopter.
36
37 Mr. White: What was his impression of the submarine. Was it there trying to help, or
38 standing by there? Phrase however you think clearest.
39
40 Interpreter: He says "why are they just looking at us through binoculars?". He was
41 wondering why are these guys not helping us? Don't they have a boat? Why are they just
42 sitting there? But he wants to clarify also that it was explained to him that they didn't
43 have the capabilities to launch a life raft. He understands now why the actions they were
44 doing that.
45
46 Mr. White: What are the characteristics of the ships' propeller?

1
2 Interpreter: It is 4-blade controllable pitch propeller.
3
4 Mr. White: The RPM he was giving us, was that propeller RPM or Engine RPM?
5
6 Interpreter: Engine.
7
8 Mr. White: Does he know what the reduction of the propeller RPM is?
9
10 Interpreter: On the outer ring is the engine RPM, on the inner ring is propeller RPM.
11
12 Mr. White: So is there a separate pitch control for the propeller? There should be.
13
14 Mr. Roth-Roffy: No, not necessarily. The newer ones are combined control. One
15 throttle controls the pitch and engine.
16
17 Interpreter: The throttle controls are the same. There is a separate indication of the
18 propeller pitch.
19
20 Mr. White: Does he know what the inside propeller RPM reads when the engine RPM
21 is 440? What we are trying to determine is how fast the propeller was turning.
22
23 Interpreter: He not real strong on the engineering part of it, but they usually use the
24 outside or engine speed. He can't recall for sure but thinks its about 2 to 1 ratio.
25
26 Mr. White: Is the vessel compartmentalized? Are there watertight doors to
27 compartmentalize the vessel?
28
29 Interpreter: They do have bulkheads, but cannot identify it on the drawing. The
30 compartments don't have doors, but are fixed bulkheads. They extend up to above the
31 waterline. [This basically up to but not including the second deck.]
32
33 Mr. Roth-Roffy: A follow-on question, is the engine room unmanned?
34
35 Interpreter: There is a watch down there.
36
37 LCDR Peterson: For confirmation, you have had no other accidents?
38
39 Interpreter: No, first time
40
41 LCDR Peterson: How many times has he been in and out of Honolulu before?
42
43 Interpreter: 21 years times three.
44
45 LCDR Peterson: Has he seen submarines at sea before?
46

1 Interpreter: When they usually depart, they'll go east. He has seen submarines
2 traveling on the surface.
3
4 Mr. Roth-Roffy: How many men on watch in engine room.
5
6 Interpreter: During maneuvering, three. Normal underway watch, 2.
7
8 Mr. Roth-Roffy: At the time of the collision, how many were there?
9
10 Interpreter: 3
11
12 Mr. Roth-Roffy: Does he know which three?
13
14 Interpreter: chief engineer, first engineer, and Kagajao.
15
16 TAPE RUNS OUT